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BOGOTA AND SAN SALVADOR FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY'S TRAVELING  
PARTY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL KCRM HO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ZELAYA'S PROPOSED TOPICS OF DISCUSSION  
WITH THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Ford, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On Friday May 30, the Ambassador met with President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya to discuss the President's upcoming meeting with the Deputy Secretary. The Ambassador has met with all individuals who have meetings scheduled with the Deputy Secretary in order to help them understand his reasons for visiting and to make the most of their time. Zelaya did not seem to have thought at all about the importance of this meeting and declared off the cuff that he would like to discuss the revision of U.S policy towards Latin America, the revision of U.S. assistance policy, the Arcadia Foundation and Robert Carmona-Borjas, UN Ambassador Jorge Arturo Reina, and temporary protected status. The Ambassador made suggestions in order to help the meeting go more smoothly, but we cannot be sure Zelaya will take his advice until the meeting takes place. End summary.

Revision of U.S. policy towards Latin America in general

¶2. (C) Zelaya thinks that U.S. policy has lost most of its support in Latin America because it stresses security issues and the fight against terrorism. He says the USG is ignoring food and poverty issues and that our Ag policy hurts Latin America. He also thinks our energy policy hurts Latin America. The Ambassador pointed out that indeed the Bush administration was doing precisely what he was recommending, by developing the MCC and increasing USAID funding to Honduras to \$140 million per year. Zelaya then said he would complain to the Deputy Secretary about how difficult it is to get a visa and how annoying it is to go through security in U.S. airports. He said he would also bring up the example of a friend who encountered problems when he went to withdraw \$20,000 in cash from a U.S. bank account and the bank requested a valid U.S. identification. (Note: It appears that the individual may have encountered issues because of the amount of the withdrawal or because of anti-money laundering regulations. End note.)

Revision of U.S. Assistance policy

¶3. (C) Zelaya complained that the type of aid the USG gives is difficult to administer, because we require public bids and have to approve those in high level positions who will administer the assistance. He asked that we adopt a more flexible type of assistance that can be given out quickly and without any red tape. (Note: Zelaya's pet project, the "Solidarity Net" or "Red Solidaria" gives out poverty reduction funds in cash payments in many villages. The women in these villages then complain to us that their husbands spend the cash on alcohol. End note.)

Arcadia Foundation/Robert Carmona-Borjas

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¶4. (C) Zelaya is deeply upset by the work of Arcadia Foundation to fight corruption and abuse of power. Carmona, who works for Arcadia, has found a voice in Honduras, and his pronouncements are often carried in the local press. Many of these statements are direct attacks on Zelaya and his cronies, especially former Honudtel Director Marcelo Chimirri. (Note: Zelaya is convinced that the USG is behind Carmona and the Arcadia Foundation, despite the Ambassador's repeated attempts to persuade him otherwise. The Ambassador has let Zelaya know that Carmona is a free individual with the right to express his opinions. Zelaya, however, has developed a convoluted chart that shows who Carmona went to school with, and who is on the board of directors of the foundation -- all to prove that the USG controls this NGO. End Note.) Zelaya would like us to investigate Carmona -- his immigration status, his international dealings, his bank accounts. He said that the CIA and Cuban exile groups are behind Carmona and he wants them exposed. The Ambassador could not dissuade him from bringing this up with the Deputy Secretary, so he suggested that maybe a written document with the accusations could be given to the Deputy Secretary, instead of wasting much of his 30 minute meeting on this topic. Zelaya agreed.

Honduran UN Ambassador Jorge Arturo Reina

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¶5. (C) Zelaya said he would like to bring Reina to Tegucigalpa for the meeting with Deputy Secretary. He said that he wanted the Deputy Secretary to "get to know" Reina and so he would understand that Reina is not a terrorist. The Ambassador opined that this was not necessary. Zelaya asked if a meeting could be arranged for the two of them in New York or Washington, and the Ambassador said we could

certainly attempt to arrange one.

Temporary Protected Status

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¶6. (C) As a complete after-thought, Zelaya asked if TPS was up for renewal soon. When it was explained to him that it was indeed up for renewal this fall and that the decision would be taken by the Bush Administration, he said, "Well, then I guess I should ask for the Deputy Secretary's support."

Comment

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¶7. (C) It was obvious that Zelaya had not thought about his meeting with the Deputy Secretary or the best way to make use of his time. The Ambassador recommended that instead of complaining and criticizing, that he explain to the Deputy Secretary that as an ally, Zelaya was concerned about what he saw as trends in the region and that he would like to inform the Deputy Secretary of what he was seeing and hearing. The Ambassador also recommended that he not just criticize, but acknowledge the United States for all of its assistance and for all of the ways we have collaborated together. Zelaya appeared to take this advice, in addition to the suggestion that he not bring Reina from New York, but we cannot be sure until the meeting takes place. Nicaraguan President Ortega flew in unannounced to Tegucigalpa on Sunday, June 1, ostensibly to pay his respects to Central American Integration Bank President Harry Braugitham, who perished in the TACA 390 crash on May 30th, but we believe it could have been just a convenient excuse for Ortega to come to Honduras to discuss the Deputy Secretary's visit. Ortega's chartered aircraft landed at Soto Cano AFB, allowing Zelaya to boast that commercial aircraft can land safely at the newly designated (by Zelaya) international airport, and that the first plane to land was Ortega's to demonstrate to all how times have changed. End Comment.

FORD